

A cartoon mascot of a flag football player is in the background. The mascot is wearing a jersey with a cross on the front, shorts, and cleats. It is holding a flag football in its right hand and has its left hand on its hip. The mascot is running to the right, indicated by motion lines behind it.

Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation Youth Flag Football Rules and Regulations



Practice Time

1. Beginning with the 2014 season teams may not practice for more than 4 hours in a week prior to the start of school. Once school begins, teams may not practice for more than 3 hours in a week.
2. Practice times and dates will be determined by the coaching staff of the individual team. The coaches volunteer their time, so practice schedules will have to work around their schedules.
3. Practice sites are pre-determined by the Harrisonburg Park and Recreation Athletic Staff.

The Basics

1. A coin toss determines the first possession. Visiting team calls the toss.
2. The game will be played on an 80 yard field.
3. The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 40-yard line and has four plays to get to the next 40 yard line for a first down. Teams then have four plays to reach the 20 yard line for a first down. If a team has not scored a touchdown by this point, they have four downs to do so. If a team fails to gain a first down or score, the ball changes possession and new offensive team takes over on its 40-yard line.
4. There are no kickoffs.
5. All possession changes, except interceptions, start on the offense's 40-yard line.
6. Interceptions may be returned, unless it's a conversion attempt, at that point the ball is dead.
 - a. If interceptions are not returned to the 40 yard line, once the ball is dead, the team will start at their own 40 yard line.
 - b. If interceptions are returned into their opponent's side of the field, once the ball is dead, the team will begin play from the spot of the dead ball.
7. Teams change sides after the first 18 minutes. Possession changes to loser of the coin toss.
8. A team has 30 seconds to snap the football.
9. Games are 36 minutes long, with two 18 minute, running clock, halves. The clock only stops on a change of possession, once the official spots the ball and the ball is snapped, the clock will start again.
10. There is no overtime.
11. Each team has two 60 second timeouts a half.
12. Officials and League Administrators can stop the clock at their discretion.
13. Teams must field 8 players at all times. A minimum of 5 players have to be on the line of scrimmage while on offense.
14. Teams will play a four game season. Games will be played on Wednesday evenings at Purcell Park Football Field at 6:00pm and 7:00pm.

15. 1 Coach will be allowed to be on the playing field for the offense and the defense.
However the offensive coach must move behind the offense prior to each snap of the ball (away from the action). The defensive coach must move toward the sideline, or behind the defense prior to each snap of the ball (away from the action).
16. Jerseys must be tucked-in during game play.
17. Score will not be kept for these games, touchdowns and conversions will be announced, however the score will not be reflected on the score board.

Running

1. Only direct handoffs behind the line of scrimmage are permitted.
2. Offense may use multiple handoffs.
3. The player who takes the handoff can throw the ball from behind the line of scrimmage.
4. Once the ball has been handed off, all defensive players are eligible to rush.
5. Spinning, juking, cutting, and sidestepping is allowed, but players cannot leave their feet to avoid defensive player.
6. Runners may not leave their feet to advance the ball. Diving, leaping, and jumping are considered flag guarding.
7. The ball is spotted where the ball carrier's feet are when the flag is pulled, not where the ball is located.
8. Absolutely NO laterals or pitches of any kind are allowed beyond the line of scrimmage.
9. Pitches and laterals are allowed behind the line of scrimmage, however if the ball is not fielded cleanly it is returned to the spot of the initial pitching player.

Receiving

1. All players are eligible to receive passes (including the quarterback if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage).
2. Only one player is allowed in motion at a time. Motion must not be toward the line of scrimmage.
3. A player must have at least one foot inbounds when making a reception.
4. Simultaneous possession on a reception is awarded to the offense.

Passing

1. Shovel passes are allowed but must be received beyond the line of scrimmage.
2. Interceptions may be returned, but not on conversions.
3. Interceptions change the possession of the ball at the point the defender's flag is pulled.
4. Interceptions are the only changes of possession that have potential to not start on the 40-yard line.
5. Interceptions are live and can be returned.
6. Passes that hit the ground are dead balls and may not be advanced.

Blocking

1. Players can be in two or three point stances on the offensive line.
2. Blocking is intended to be minimal contact. Players may come out of their stance and get in the blocking position, but at that point they are screening or shadowing the defensive rush.
3. Contact is allowed, but attempts to push over, hold, grab, etc. will be penalized.

Dead Balls

1. The ball must be snapped between the legs, no off to one side to start play.
2. Substitutions may be made on any dead ball.
3. Play is ruled “dead” when:
 - a. Ball carrier’s flag is pulled.
 - b. Ball carrier steps out of bounds.
 - c. Touchdown or safety is scored.
 - d. Ball carrier’s knee hits the ground.
 - e. Ball carrier’s flag falls out.
4. There are no fumbles. The ball is spotted where the ball hits the ground. Unless the ball is fumbled forward, at that point it is spotted where the ball carrier was positioned when the fumble occurred.

Rushing the Quarterback

1. If a rusher leaves early, before the ball is snapped, they may return behind the rush line before the ball is snapped.
 - a. If the player crosses the line of scrimmage, it is a penalty.
2. Rushers may try to knock down passes but may not contact the quarterback in anyway.
3. All players who rush the quarterback must be a minimum of two yards from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
4. Any number of players can rush the quarterback. Players not rushing the quarterback may defend the line of scrimmage.
5. Once the ball is handed off, the two yard rule is no longer in effect, and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage. A special marker, or referee, will designate two yards from the line of scrimmage.
6. No tackling, grabbing, or holding is permitted. After the ball is passed, there is no contact on the quarterback.
7. Defensive rush must attempt to run around the blockers, not through. Any attempts to pushover or run through blockers will be penalized.

Flag Pulling

1. Player must have full possession of the ball to have their flag pulled.
2. Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle or run through the ball carrier.
3. It is illegal to strip the ball away from the ball carrier.
4. If a ball carriers flag inadvertently falls off, the player only needs to be touched to end the play.
5. Defenders cannot intentionally pull the flag off of non-ball carriers.

Sportsmanship/Roughing

1. If the field official witnesses any acts of tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, illegal blocking, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player will be penalized. Initial warnings may be issued and officials discretion.
2. If illegal contact continues by an individual player, that player will be ejected. Foul play will not be tolerated.
3. Trash talking is illegal. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. (Trash talk is talk that may be deemed offensive to officials, opposing players, teams, and spectators). If trash talking occurs the official will issue a warning. If it continues, the player or players will be ejected from the game.
4. We will be using the “three strikes and you’re out” policy with roughing or tackling. First will be a warning, second will be a penalty, third penalty will be an ejection.

Penalties

1. All penalties will be called by the field officials.
2. Officials determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage.
3. Only the team head coach may ask the game official questions about the rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgment calls.
4. Games cannot end on a defensive penalty, unless the offense declines it.

Defense:

1. Offsides: 5 yard penalty.
2. Interference: 10 yards and automatic first down.
3. Illegal Contact (holding, tackling, etc.): 10 yards and automatic first down.
4. Illegal Flag Pull (player not in possession of ball): 5 yard penalty.
5. Illegal Rushing (starting from inside 2-yard marker): 5 yard penalty.
6. Defensive Pass Interference: 10 yards and automatic first down.

Offense:

1. Illegal Motion (more than one person moving, false start, etc.): 5 yard penalty.
2. Illegal Forward Pass (pass thrown from beyond line of scrimmage): 5 yards and loss of down.
3. Offensive pass interference (illegal pick play, pushing off, etc.): 10 yards and loss of down.
4. Flag Guarding: 5 yard penalty from spot of foul.
5. Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defenders access to the flags by stiff arm, dropping of the head, hand, arm, or shoulder, or cover with the jersey or football.
6. Delay of Game: Clock stops, 5 yard penalty.
7. Coaches, family members, parents, and spectators are required to observe the contest from a designated area. Participants, coaches, parents, and family members must conduct themselves appropriately during league play. Comments or cheers must be positive, not negative, to coaches, players, teams, and officials. Misconduct may lead to removal from premises at the discretion of the Harrisonburg Parks and Recreation.

Attire

1. Cleats are allowed, except for metal spikes. Inspections must be made. All players are encouraged to wear a protective mouthpiece.
2. Game jerseys and flag belts will be provided.
3. Game jerseys must be tucked into the player's shorts/pants.
4. All jewelry and wristbands other than sweatbands must be removed.